



# Connecting Schools, Families, and Communities

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**R**ecent years have seen an escalating expansion in home involvement in schooling and school-community linkages. Much of the impetus for change stems from educational reforms and initiatives for restructuring community health and social service agencies. The hope is to better meet the needs of children, families, and society by improving the effectiveness of schools and service agencies and hopefully strengthening neighborhoods. A key strategy is to establish collaborations. Properly done, enhanced connections among schools, families, and communities should lead to a marked reduction in young people's problems. Poorly done, these connections can end up as another effort that promised much but delivered little and even did some harm. Our goal here is to provide a perspective on efforts to enhance connections among schools, homes, and communities and suggest some major implications for the changing role of school counselors.

## **Collaboration for What?**

Schools are located in communities, but often are islands with no bridges to the mainland. Families live in neighborhoods, often with little connection to each other or to the schools their youngsters attend. Nevertheless, all the entities affect each other, for good or bad. Because of this and because they share goals related to education and socialization of the young, schools, homes, and communities must collaborate with each other if they are to minimize problems and maximize results. Dealing with multiple and interrelated factors such as those arising from poverty, violence, developmental anomalies, crime, inadequate housing, and unemployment requires multiple and interrelated solutions (Shorr, 1997). Interrelated solutions require collaboration.

### Why Should Schools Be Interested in Working with Others?

Schools can better address barriers to learning and teaching and promote positive development when they are an integral and positive part of the community. Reciprocally, families and other community entities can better address barriers to development, learning, and parenting, and strengthen the fabric of family and community life by working in partnership with schools.

Safety provides a major example of why schools need to collaborate. Concern about violence at schools provides opportunities for further isolation from the surrounding community or for enhancing connections with families and other neighborhood resources. In many cases, those responsible for school safety act as if violence on the campus had little to do with violence in the home and community. Youngsters generally do not experience such a separation. For them violence is a fact of life. And, it is not just about guns and killing. As Curcio and First (1993) noted:

Violence in schools is a complex issue. Students assault teachers, strangers harm children, students hurt each other, and any one of the parties may come to school already damaged and violated [e.g., physically, sexually, emotionally, or negligently at home or on their way to or from school]. The kind of violence an individual encounters varies also, ranging from mere bullying to rape or murder (p. 4).

Clearly, the problem goes well beyond the widely reported incidents that capture media attention. There isn't good data on how many youngsters are affected by all the forms of violence or how many are debilitated by such experiences. But of persons who have good reason to know, few would deny that the numbers are large. Far too many youngsters are caught up in cycles where they are the recipient or perpetrator (and sometimes both) of physical and sexual harassment ranging from excessive teasing and bullying to mayhem and major criminal acts. Given the scope of the problem—and its linkage with other problems that are significant barriers to development, learning, parenting, and teaching—simplistic and single factor solutions cannot work. The need is for a full continuum of interventions, ranging from primary prevention through early-after-onset interventions to treatment of individuals with severe, pervasive, and chronic problems. School and community policy makers must quickly move to embrace com-

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prehensive, multifaceted school-wide and community-wide models for dealing with factors that interfere with learning and teaching and contribute to violent and aggressive behavior. Moreover, they must do so in a way that fully integrates the activity into school reform at every school site.

While informal school, home, and community linkages are relatively simple to initiate, establishing major long-term connections is challenging. Effective collaboration requires vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reform. In particular, systemic restructuring of existing educational support personnel and resources is essential to ensuring effective connections are made. Such restructuring requires more than outreach to link with community resources (and certainly more than adopting a school-linked services

model), more than coordinating school-owned services with each other and with community services, and more than creating Family Resource Centers, Full Service Schools, and Community Schools. Policy makers must realize that, as important as it is to reform and restructure health and human services and link them to schools as much as feasible, the focus is too limited. Reducing fragmentation of services may reduce some inappropriate redundancy and waste. Providing more services at schools may enhance access and help connect with hard-to-reach clients, thereby increasing the number assisted. And, with such changes, some outcomes can be enhanced. It must be recognized, however, that this focus on services constitutes only one facet of a comprehensive, cohesive approach for strengthening youngsters, their families, and their neighborhoods and ensuring safety.

Restructuring to develop truly comprehensive approaches requires a basic policy shift that moves schools from the inadequate two component model that dominates school reform to a three component framework that guides the weaving together of school, home, and community resources (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 1998). Such an expanded approach is important not only for reducing problems, but it is also essential if schools are to achieve their stated goal of ensuring all students succeed. As the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) concluded, "School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge" (p. 61). This painful lesson must be learned by school districts where reform pays little or no attention to appropriately addressing barriers to student learning.

## Defining Collaboration and its Purposes

Former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders has been widely quoted as cautioning that: We all say we want to collaborate, but what we really mean is that we want to continue doing things as we have always done them while others change to fit what we are doing. Others have defined collaboration as an unnatural act between non-consenting adults.

Among professionals, collaboration often is seen in terms of teams designed to work in multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary ways. When the focus shifts to connecting school, home, and community resources, the nature and scope of collaboration expands dramatically. Minimally, formal efforts to create school, home, and community collaborations involve building relationships to connect and mobilize resources (e.g., financial and social capital) to enhance effectiveness and cost-efficiency. In this respect, considerable attention has been paid in recent years to linking health and human service agencies to schools in order to increase availability and access and fill gaps (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Growing appreciation of social capital has resulted in an expansion of collaborative bodies to include a wide range of volunteers, including parents (e.g., see Brotherton & Clarke, 1997; Terry, 1999; Williamson, 1997). Families have always provided a direct connection between school and community. The political realities of local control have further expanded collaborative bodies to encompass a fuller range of stakeholders, especially representatives of families and local policy makers (Adelman, 1994). In addition, the militancy of advocates for students with special needs has led to increased parent and youth participation on teams making decisions about interventions (Carpenter, King-Sears, & Keys, 1998). Many who at best were silent partners in the past are now becoming key players.

For our purposes here, any group designed to connect a school, the families of its students, and other entities from the surrounding neighborhood is referred to as a "school-community" collaborative. Such collaboratives can encompass a wide range of resources. These include agencies and organizations providing programs and services (e.g., education and youth development, health and human services, juvenile justice, vocational education, economic development), entities that share facilities (e.g., schools, parks, libraries), and various sources of social and financial capital, including youth, families, religious groups, community based organizations, civic groups, and businesses (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

In terms of functions, distinctions can be made among collaborations whose intent is only to enhance communication and cooperation, those that focus on coordinating activity, those concerned with integrating overlapping activity, and those attempting to weave

their responsibilities and resources together to create a new form of unified entity. As to specifics, connections may be made to:

- Share use of school or neighborhood facilities, equipment, and other resources
- Enhance safety
- Raise funds and pursue grants
- Underwrite activity
- Acquire nonprofessional volunteers and professionals as well as others with special expertise to provide assistance, pro bono services, mentoring, and training
- Share and disseminate information
- Network and provide mutual support
- Share responsibility for planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services
- Build and maintain infrastructure
- Expand opportunities for community service, internships, jobs, recreation, enrichment
- Enhance public relations
- Share celebrations
- Build a sense of community

## Dimensions and Characteristics

In analyzing school-community efforts related to school-linked service initiatives, Franklin and Streeter (1995) differentiated five approaches—informal, coordinated, partnerships, collaborations, and integrated services. The differences are seen in terms of the degree of system change required. Distinctions can also be made about the degree of formality, time commitment, breadth of the connections as well as a range of other dimensions. Because forms of school-community collaborations can differ in so many ways, it is helpful to categorize key dimensions of such arrangements. (See Table.) School-community connections also can be viewed in terms of the full intervention continuum (i.e., prevention, early-after-onset interventions, and treatment) and domains for collaborative activity. The matrix (see Figure p. 302) offers a simple framework highlighting the wealth of resources that might be integrated to enhance efforts to address barriers to student learning and promote a wide range of positive outcomes, including those that make society safe for youngsters and their families.

## State of the Art

Persons concerned with health and social services and those who have a broad view of youth development and learning have long understood the importance of schools interfacing with the broader communities in which they exist. Thus, school-community collaboratives have a long history. However, the literature on this topic is mainly one of description and advocacy. Where there are data, the findings are from pioneering project evaluations.

### A Growing Movement Across the Country

Across the country various levels and forms of school-community collaboration are being tested, including state-wide initiatives. Some cataloging has begun, but there is no complete picture of the scope of activity. It is clear that the trend among major demonstration projects is to incorporate health, mental health, and social services into Centers (including school-based health centers, family centers, parent centers). These are established at or near a school and are adopting terms such as school-linked services, coordinated services, wrap-around services, one-stop shopping, full service schools, systems of care, and community schools (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999; Melaville & Blank, 1998).

A few initiatives are driven by school reform, but most stem from efforts to reform community health and social services with the aim of reducing redundancy and increasing access and effectiveness. While the majority of effort focuses narrowly on "services," some initiatives link schools and communities as ways to enhance school-to-career opportunities, encourage the community to come to school as volunteers and mentors, and expand programs for after-school recreation and enrichment with the goal of reducing delinquency and violence.

**Table 1. Key Dimensions Relevant to School-Community Collaborative Arrangements**

#### **I. Initiation**

- A. School-led
- B. Community-driven

#### **II. Nature of Collaboration**

- A. Formal
  - memorandum of understanding
  - contract
  - organizational/operational mechanisms
- B. Informal
  - verbal agreements
  - ad hoc arrangements

#### **III. Focus**

- A. Improvement of program and service provision
  - for enhancing case management
  - for enhancing use of resources
- B. Major systemic reform
  - to enhance coordination
  - for organizational restructuring
  - for transforming system structure/function

#### **IV. Scope of Collaboration**

- A. Number of programs and services involved (from just a few—up to a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum)
- B. Horizontal collaboration
  - within a school/agency
  - among school/agencies
- C. Vertical collaboration
  - within a catchment area (e.g., school and community agency, family of schools, two or more agencies)
  - among different levels of jurisdictions (e.g., community/city/county/state/federal)

#### **V. Scope of Potential Impact**

- A. Narrow-band—a small proportion of youth and families can access what they need
- B. Broad-band—all in need can access what they need

#### **VI. Ownership & Governance of Programs and Services**

- A. Owned & governed by school
- B. Owned & governed by community
- C. Shared ownership & governance
- D. Public-private venture—shared ownership & governance

#### **VII. Location of Programs and Services**

- A. Community-based, school-linked
- B. School-based

#### **VIII. Degree of Cohesiveness among Multiple Interventions Serving the Same Student/Family**

- A. Unconnected
- B. Communicating
- C. Cooperating
- D. Coordinated
- E. Integrated

**Figure 1. Framework Highlighting Areas for School-Community Collaborations**

Domains for Collaborative Activity							
Intervention Continuum	Health*	Education**	Social Services	Work/Career	Enrichment Recreation	Juvenile Justice	Neighborhood/Community Improvement
Prevention							
Early-After Onset Intervention							
Treatment of Severe/Pervasive & Chronic Problems							

\* Health encompasses both physical and mental health.

\*\* Education encompasses regular/special; traditional/alternative; preschool-higher education.

A budding trend is for school-linked services initiatives to mesh with the movement to enhance the youth development infrastructure. The youth development movement encompasses a range of concepts and practices aimed at promoting protective factors, asset-building, wellness, and empowerment. Included are efforts to establish full-fledged community schools, programs for community and social capital mobilization, and initiatives to build community policies and structures to enhance youth support, safety, recreation, work, service, and enrichment. This focus on community embraces a wide range of partners, including families and community-based and community-linked organizations. Youth development initiatives clearly expand intervention efforts beyond services and programs. They encourage a view of schools as hubs for community-wide learning and activity. Increased federal funding for after-school programs at school sites enhances this view by expanding opportunities for recreation, enrichment, academic supports, and child care. Adult education and training at neighborhood schools also are changing the old view that schools close when the youngsters leave. The concept of a "second shift" at school sites, which is designed to respond to community needs, is beginning to spread.

School-community linkages are meant to benefit a wide range of youngsters and their families, and some of the best articulated collaborations are those being established for special education students with emotional disturbance. This population is served by classrooms, counseling, day care, and residential and

hospital programs. The need for all involved to work together in providing services and facilitating the transitions to and from services is widely acknowledged. To address the needs for monitoring and maintaining care, considerable investment has been made in establishing what are called wrap-around services and systems of care. Initial evaluations of systems of care underscore both the difficulty of studying collaboratives and the policy issues that arise regarding appropriate outcomes and cost-effectiveness (Hoagwood, 1997; Salzer & Bickman, 1997).

A reasonable inference from available data is that school-community collaborations can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. They not only improve access to and coordination of interventions, they encourage schools to open their doors and enhance opportunities for community and family involvement.

### Some Problems

School-community collaborations certainly are not panaceas. Moreover, when they are not carefully developed, they generate various problems. In too many instances, so-called collaborations amount to little more than co-location of community agency staff on school campuses. Services continue to function in relative isolation from each other, focusing on discrete problems and specialized services for individuals and small groups. Too little thought has been given to the importance of meshing (as contrasted with simply linking) community services and programs with existing school owned and operated activity. The result is that a small number of

youngsters are provided services that they may not otherwise have received, but little connection is made with school staff and programs. Because of this, a new form of fragmentation is emerging as community and school professionals engage in a form of parallel play at school sites (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1996; 1997). Moreover, when "outside" professionals are brought into schools, district personnel, including school counselors, may view the move as discounting their skills and threatening their jobs. On the other side, the "outsiders" often feel unappreciated. Conflicts arise over "turf," use of space, confidentiality, and liability. School professionals tend not to understand the work culture of community agencies; agency staff are rather naive about the culture of schools. All this is not conducive to helping the many students whose academic performance and future lives are undermined by a host of barriers to development and learning.

Fragmentation related to school-community connections is worsened by the failure of policy makers at all levels to recognize the need to reform and restructure the work of both school and community professionals who are in positions to address barriers and facilitate development and learning. For example, the prevailing approach among school reformers is to concentrate almost exclusively on improving instruction and management of schools. This is not to say they are unaware of the many barriers to learning. They simply don't spend much time developing effective ways to deal with such matters. They mainly welcome the idea of a few health and social services linking up with schools believing this will do the trick (Hardiman, Curcio, & Fortune, 1998). The reality is that prevailing approaches to reform continue to marginalize all efforts to address barriers to learning (see Adelman & Taylor, 1998). As a result, little is known about effective processes and mechanisms for building school-community connections to prevent and ameliorate youngsters' problems—learning, behavior, emotional, and health—and ensure personal safety. From our perspective, the situation is unlikely to improve as long as so little attention is paid to restructuring what schools and communities already do to deal with psychosocial and health problems and promote healthy development. Moreover, all this underscores the failure to develop models that can guide development of productive school-community partnerships.

### **Building and Maintaining Effective Collaboratives**

Efforts to establish effective school-community collaboratives require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Policies and processes are needed to ensure such connections are well developed and institutionalized so that the needs of all youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods are appropriately met.

### **Policy**

From a policy perspective, efforts must be made to guide and support the building of collaborative bridges connecting school, family, and community by enhancing reforms that

- Move existing **governance** toward shared decision making and appropriate degrees of local control and private sector involvement—a key facet of this is guaranteeing roles and providing incentives, supports, and training for effective involvement of line staff, families, students, and other community members
- Create **change teams and change agents** to carry out the daily activities of systemic change related to building essential support and redesigning processes to initiate, establish, and maintain changes over time
- Delineate **high-level leadership assignments** and underwrite essential leadership/management training regarding vision for change, how to effect such changes, how to institutionalize the changes, and generate ongoing renewal
- Establish institutionalized **mechanisms to manage and enhance resources** for school-community collaborations and related systems (focusing on analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing efforts)
- Provide adequate funds for **capacity building** related to both accomplishing desired system changes and enhancing intervention quality over time—a key facet of this is a major investment in staff recruitment and development using well-designed and technologically sophisticated strategies for dealing with the problems of frequent turnover and providing information updates; another facet is an investment in technical assistance at all levels and for all aspects and stages of the work
- Implement a sophisticated approach to **accountability** that initially emphasizes data that can help develop effective approaches for collaboration in providing interventions and a results-oriented focus on short-term benchmarks; data that also evolve into evaluation of long-range indicators of impact. (Here, too, technologically sophisticated and integrated management information systems are essential.)

Such a strengthened policy focus would allow personnel to build and institutionalize the complex continuum of integrated interventions needed to make a significant impact in addressing the health, learning, and general well-being and safety of all young people through strengthening them, their families, their schools, and their neighborhoods.

### **Processes: Building from Localities Outward**

In developing an effective comprehensive continuum of programs, an infrastructure of organizational and opera-

tional mechanisms at all levels are required for oversight, leadership, resource development, and ongoing support. Such mechanisms provide ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize the component to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each level, these tasks require that staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involvement. These tasks also call for redeployment of existing resources, as well as finding new ones.

An effective school-community collaboration must coalesce at the local level. Thus, a school and its surrounding community are a reasonable focal point around which to build a multilevel organizational plan. Moreover, primary emphasis on this level meshes nicely with contemporary restructuring views that stress increased school-based and neighborhood control.

To ensure that comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches play out at the local level, processes should be conceived in terms of building from localities outward. That is, first the focus is on mechanisms, tasks, and procedures at the school-neighborhood level. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance efforts at a locality, mechanisms are conceived that enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Finally, system-wide mechanisms can be designed to provide support for what each locality is trying to develop. The following discussion of infrastructure and mechanisms reflects this "building outwards" strategy.

### **Infrastructure and Mechanisms**

School-community collaborations require development of a well-conceived infrastructure of mechanisms that are appropriately sanctioned and endorsed by governing bodies. Besides basic resources, key facets of the infrastructure are designated leaders (e.g., administrative, staff) and work group mechanisms (e.g., resource- and program-oriented teams).

One starting place is to establish a school-based, resource-oriented team (e.g., a Resource Coordinating Team). Properly constituted with school, home, and community representatives, a resource team leads and steers efforts to maintain and improve a multifaceted and integrated approach. This includes developing linkages into partnerships. Such a team works to reduce fragmentation and enhance cost-efficacy by analyzing, planning, and redeploying resources, and then coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and

strengthening ongoing systemic organization and operations (Rosenblum, DiCecco, Taylor, & Adelman, 1995).

Because neighboring localities have common concerns, they may have programmatic activity that can use the same resources. Many natural connections exist in catchment areas serving a high school and its feeder schools. For example, the same family often has children attending all levels of schooling at the same time. In addition, some school districts and agencies already pull together several geographically related clusters to combine and integrate personnel and programs.

Through coordination and sharing among a "family" of school-neighborhood collaborations, redundancy can be minimized and resources can be deployed equitably and pooled to reduce costs. A multilocality Resource Coordinating Council, consisting of one or two representatives from each local resource team, can help (a) coordinate and integrate programs serving multiple schools and neighborhoods, (b) identify and meet common needs with respect to guidelines and staff development, and (c) create linkages and collaborations among schools and agencies. More generally, such a Council provides a key mechanism for leadership, communication, maintenance, quality improvement, and ongoing development of a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. With respect to linking with community resources, multilocality teams are especially attractive to community agencies that often don't have the time or personnel to link with individual schools.

Natural starting points for Resource Teams and Councils are the sharing of need-assessments, resource mapping, analyses, and recommendations for reform and restructuring. Initial focus may be on such matters as addressing community-school violence and developing prevention programs and safe-school and neighborhood plans.

At the system-wide level, the need is for policy, guidance, leadership, and assistance to ensure localities can establish the necessary comprehensive continuum of interventions. Development of system-wide mechanisms should reflect a clear conception of how each supports local activity. Key at this level is system-wide leadership with responsibility and accountability for maintaining the vision, developing strategic plans, supporting capacity building, and ensuring coordination and integration of activity among localities and system-wide. Other functions at this level include evaluation, encompassing determination of the equity in program delivery, quality improvement reviews of all mechanisms and procedures, and review of results. Also, at the system-wide level is the need for school boards to provide leadership related to comprehensive approaches to school-community partnerships. Such matters appear regularly on school board agendas. The problem is that the matters tend to be handled in an ad hoc manner. This is because the administrative structure

of school districts is not organized in ways that coalesce various programs for addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development and safety. The piecemeal structure reflects the marginalized status of such functions and both creates and maintains the fragmented policies and practices that characterize efforts to address barriers. School boards need a standing committee that deals in depth and consistently with these functions so they are addressed in more cohesive and effective ways.

#### **A Note of Caution**

Without careful planning, implementation, and capacity building, collaborative efforts will rarely live up to the initial hope. For example, formal arrangements for working together often take the form of committees and meetings. To be effective, such sessions require thoughtful and skillful facilitation. Even when they begin with great enthusiasm, poorly facilitated working sessions quickly degenerate into another meeting, more talk but little action, another burden, and a waste of time. This is particularly likely to happen when the emphasis is mainly on the unfocused mandate to "collaborate," rather than on moving an important vision and mission forward through effective working relationships.

Most of us know how hard it is to work effectively with a group. Staff members can point to the many committees and teams that drained their time and energy to little avail. Obviously true collaboration involves more than meeting and talking. The point is to work in ways that produce the type of actions that result in effective programs. For this to happen, steps must be taken to ensure that committees, councils, and teams are formed in ways that maximize their effectiveness. This includes providing them with the training, time, support, and authority to carry out their role and functions. It is when such matters are ignored that groups find themselves meeting but going nowhere.

#### **Implications for Schools, School Counselors, and Counselor Education**

The new millennium marks a turning point for how schools and communities address healthy development and problems such as the safety of children and youth. Currently being determined is: In what direction should we go? And who should decide this? If any school counselor is not yet shaping the answers to these questions, it is time to find a place at the relevant tables.

**S**chools and communities must work together to address barriers to learning and promote success

#### **New Models for Enabling Student Success**

Viewing school/community environments through the lens of addressing barriers to development, learning, and teaching suggests the need for new reform models. School counselors, and indeed all pupil services personnel, can play a role in developing new models and must play a role in shaping new approaches as they emerge at schools.

Our work over the past decade exemplifies the type of new model that has profound implications for school counselors. We have proposed that schools and communities must work together to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted component to address barriers to learning and promote success (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 1998). Such an enabling (or learner support) component is conceived as a primary and

essential facet of school reform and as requiring a policy shift that expands current reforms beyond their tendency to concentrate mainly on improving instruction and system management/governance. We see development of this third component of school reform as being guided by a framework of six areas of function:

1. Classroom-focused programs
2. Support for transitions
3. Student and family assistance
4. Community outreach
5. Crisis response and prevention
6. Home involvement in schooling (see Adelman & Taylor, 1997, 1998).

Such a model calls for a fundamental restructuring of what are known as pupil services or student-support services such as counseling, psychological and social services as well as other special programs (e.g., special and compensatory education programs, safe and drug-free school programs, student assistance programs, tutoring, transition programs, peer mediation, some health education efforts.). And, as noted above, mechanisms must be developed by counselors and others to coordinate and eventually integrate school-owned and community-owned programs and resources and to ensure that the component to address barriers to learning is well integrated with the instructional and management components.

As this example highlights, new models are emerging that propose major changes in the roles and functions of counselors. Indeed, existing initiatives to connect schools, families, and communities already are producing changes related to the work status of all



pupil service professionals. Some personnel have responded reactively. Others are being proactive, assuming major, varied, and expanding roles and functions. The latter course is likely to pay greater dividends. It does not come as news that the role of counselors in schools will and should undergo major changes in the next 5 to 10 years (Borders & Drury, 1992; Peeks, 1993). Counselors should move quickly to play a greater role, a leadership role, in helping schools and communities restructure support programs and services to create comprehensive, multifaceted approaches to ensure all students succeed. In this respect, every reform initiative provides both a challenge and an opportunity. Emerging examples include not only collaborative initiatives, but all efforts to enhance school safety and policies to end social promotion. And, where there is an expansion of mental health in schools, counselors should seek to enhance the foundation they already have so that they can be an asset in this arena (Lockhart & Keys, 1998).

### **Roles and Functions**

It seems evident that the field of school counseling is in a period of reevaluation. During this period, opportunities will arise not only to provide new forms of direct assistance but to play increasing roles as advocates, catalysts, brokers, and facilitators of reform and to provide various forms of consultation and in-service training. These additional duties also include the need to participate on school and district governance, planning, and evaluation bodies.

To carry out new roles, school counselors must be prepared to perform generalist as well as specialist counseling duties. For example, in the generalist arena, they can learn strategies for enhancing intervention efficacy through increased coordination and integration of programs and services. They can build their capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate a variety of learner support activities related to each of the six areas of function listed above. They also can prepare to assume roles as agents of change. All this is happening currently in the Memphis City Schools as the district expands its school reforms to encompass a complete restructuring of the ways each school addresses barriers to student learning (Memphis City Schools, 1999). At every school, a counselor has been assigned to assume a leadership role in (a) creating readiness for systemic change, (b) helping develop mechanisms for mapping, analyzing, and redeveloping relevant school resources, and (c) working to strengthen connections between school, home, and

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other community resources. As they pursue this new role, the district's counselors also will have the opportunity to assist with transdisciplinary training to create the trust, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to effective working relationships.

### **Implications for Counselor Education**

Obviously, new roles and functions, including those involving generalist duties, have profound implications for pre-service and in-service education. Emerging trends designed to counter overspecialization call for professional education that recognizes the underlying commonalities among various student problems and ensures competence for implementing both generalist and specialist strategies to ameliorate problems. These trends also call for abilities

related to enhancing collaboration among school personnel and with those in the community. Such needs are well-illustrated with respect to efforts to foster collaboration related to safe schools and safe communities.

At the pre-service stage, those who are visionary about professional preparation already are piloting interprofessional education (Brandon & Meuter, 1995; Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994). Such innovations in professional education recognize underlying commonalities among a variety of students' problems and among interventions for ameliorating them (Adelman & Taylor, 1994; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). Moreover, the aim is to focus less on intervention ownership and attend more to accomplishing desired outcomes through flexible and overlapping staff activity.

At the in-service stage, there is an evident need for policy makers to recognize and provide the necessary resources to accomplish the major capacity building job that lies ahead. It is essential to ensure in-service programs enable school counselors to learn about emerging trends and have systematic opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills for carrying out new roles and functions.

### **Concluding Comments**

The success of collaborations in enhancing school, family, and community connections is first and foremost in the hands of policy makers. If increased connections are to be more than another desired but underachieved aim of reformers, policymakers must understand the nature and scope of what is involved. They must deal with the problems of marginalization and fragmentation of policy and practice. They must support development of appropriately comprehensive and multifaceted school-

community collaborations. They must revise policy related to school-linked services, because such initiatives are a grossly inadequate response to the many complex factors that interfere with development, learning, and teaching. By focusing primarily on linking community services to schools and downplaying the role of existing school resources and other community resources, these initiatives help perpetuate an orientation that overemphasizes individually prescribed services and results in fragmented interventions. This is incompatible with developing the type of comprehensive approaches that are needed to make the statement, "We want all children to succeed," more than rhetoric.

At school sites, counselors are well situated to play catalytic roles as their field goes through a period of extensive reform and restructuring. They are in a particularly good position to enhance the ways schools, families, and communities connect (Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998). By playing such roles, school counselors not only will benefit youngsters and society, but also they will be acting in the best interests of their profession. □

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